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The Tech
Established 1881

WEATHER, p. 2
THU: 48°F | 34°F
Clear Skies
FRI: 52°F | 44°F
Partly Cloudy
SAT: 49°F | 44°F
Rainy

Volume 138, Number 25

Thursday, October 25, 2018

MIT begins reassessment of connections with Saudi Arabia

Review in response to death of Jamal Khashoggi, a journalist and well-known critic of the Saudi regime

By Jessica Shi
NEWS EDITOR

MIT is conducting a reassessment of its Institute-level engagements with Saudi Arabia following the death of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Associate Provost Richard Lester PhD '80, who advises the administration on international activities, is leading the process.

Khashoggi's fate is of "grave concern to all of us," Lester wrote in a letter sent to MIT faculty Oct. 15 and published by MIT News Oct. 22. Officials in Turkey and other countries are alleging that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman authorized the assassination.

Lester declined to comment on the details of the review until its completion, which he estimated will come in about a month.

Individual faculty members were also encouraged to "make their own determinations as to the best path forward" regarding their current or future engagements with Saudi Arabia, Lester's letter to the faculty added.

Mohammed bin Salman visited MIT in March in conjunction with the second annual Innovation to Impact forum, which was held between MIT and several Saudi Arabian entities.

"Saudi Arabia and MIT have a longstanding collaborative relationship focused on subjects of mutual interest," Kimberly Allen, director of media relations and deputy director of MIT News, wrote in an email to *The Tech* at the time.

This includes "creating opportunities for post-doctoral Saudi women scientists and engineers to study at MIT" and "supporting the development of sustainable energy," Allen continued. "Saudi Aramco is a founding member of the MIT Energy Initiative."

Mohammed bin Salman's visit sparked protests at MIT, with students demonstrating outside Lobby 7 the day prior to his arrival. "No Saudi War Criminal at MIT," their signs read.

LEON YIM—THE TECH

With a 4-2 win over the L.A. Dodgers last night, the Red Sox lead the World Series 2-0. Here, the Prudential Tower is lit up in support of the team.

Faculty members discuss new college

'This is not the Institute of AI,' one EECS professor comments at faculty forum

By Zoe Anderson
ASSOCIATE NEWS EDITOR

The faculty met twice last week to discuss the new College of Computing: once at a monthly meeting held Wednesday and again at a forum gathered specifically to hear faculty opinions on the college held Thursday.

At the monthly meeting, Dean of the School of Engineering Anantha Chandrakasan said that the structure of the new college is far from finalized and that faculty will work on it in working groups.

Opinions on the messaging of the college's purpose and mission were mixed.

Professor of Nuclear Science and Engineering Ian Hutchinson asked at the meeting how creating a college that elevates computing is going to help solve the overload of students in the EECS department. "We need to de-escalate the trend of students to flock into CS because there are so many as important things," Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson also commented that the focus for the college seems to be on the "fashionable" parts of computing.

"This is not the 'Institute of AI,'" EECS Professor Jacob White '80 said at the forum. White said he found Vice Chancellor Ian Waitz's description of the new college "so at odds with" what he envisioned. White is currently an instructor

Computing, Page 2

MIT's recycling rate cut in half due to new contamination levels

Changes in recycling industry force waste to be rejected

By Billy Woltz

The amount of recycling that MIT has collected has nearly halved over the past two months, from 49 percent of total waste to 27 percent, due to lower allowable levels of contamination and stricter enforcement of these levels by China.

MIT's waste management is handled by the MIT Department of Facilities and its Recycling and Materials Management division. The division is led by Ruth Davis, whose office is trying to reduce the amount of trash generated and increase the amount of materials recycled or reused by better educating the MIT community.

In an effort they call "Reusable Revolution," Davis and her team are working alongside custodial services and UA and GSC Sustainability to help the recycling rate recover, such as by changing signs to be more clear about what can and cannot be recycled.

MIT's recycling rate has gone down mainly due to food waste being in the single stream recycling and various lab wastes being rejected, according to Davis.

If food waste is in the recycling, it is not accepted. "[Recyclable] things must be empty and clean," Davis told *The Tech* in an interview, "If you have an iced coffee, the straw is trash and you need to dump out the ice."

In addition, blue gloves and pipette tips and boxes in the single stream recycling are rejected because of health concerns regarding anything that looks like medical waste. Davis's division is currently working on a separate stream for lab waste.

Similar drops in recycling fractions have occurred all over the world. In January of this year, China began rejecting all would-be recycling with contamination levels above 0.5 percent, a large cut from the former allowable contamination level of 4 percent. China is lowering the contamination rate out of concern for the environment and public health as part of its "Green Fence" and "Green Shield" initiatives.

Recycling, Page 2

IN SHORT

Second quarter PE classes start the week of **Oct. 29**.

Family weekend is Oct. 26–27! Registered family members can attend open classes and other events.

Sophomores and juniors can begin submitting applications (due Nov. 4) to become a **Burchard Scholar**, a program for students with strong interests in the humanities, arts, or social sciences.

Early voting has begun in Massachusetts; check www.sec.state.ma.us to find open polling places and hours.

If you are **voting absentee**, check your state's requirements and deadline as soon as possible; if you've already received your absentee ballot, don't forget to mail it back in time.

Interested in **joining** *The Tech*? Stop by for dinner Sunday at 6 p.m. or email *join@tech.mit.edu*.

Send news and tips to *news@tech.mit.edu*.

BEN KETTLE

Rowers pass under the Anderson Memorial Bridge and the Weeks Footbridge on the Head of the Charles course, whose six bridges and sharp curves pose a particular challenge.

ABC'S
Auntie Matter has returned from the ether of space to offer more advice. **CAMPUS LIFE, p. 14**

METH AND FATHERHOOD
Steve Carell talks about his role in *Beautiful Boy*. **ARTS, p. 7**

EDITORIAL
The College of Computing should focus on interdisciplinary work. **OPINION, p. 4**

BONDING OVER ROCK
Memorable tunes and intimate settings at FredFest. **ARTS, p. 9**

MIT AND SAUDI ARABIA
MIT students ask President Reif to cut ties with Saudi Arabia. **OPINION, p. 5**

SECTIONS
Opinion 4
Arts 7
Fun Pages 11
Campus Life 14

WEATHER

Nor'easter season is coming

By Jordan Benjamin and Kyle Morgenstein

The recent rainy and at times stormy period culminated Tuesday afternoon in a bizarre sequence of New England autumn tornadoes, the closest of which occurred only about 30 miles south of the MIT campus. Tornadoes in our region are a remarkable event, particularly in the cool season. However, the very humid and marginally warm air mass over the region was able to provide just enough energy for damaging storms before it was pushed out by high pressure today. Now, under this high pressure, we can expect only a couple beautiful fall days before we rapidly transition to a very active cold season pattern. A low pressure system is currently forming along the Gulf Coast, forged from the remnants of Pacific Hurricane Willa after its landfall Tuesday on the Mexican coast. By Saturday morning, this storm will surge into New England from the south as a nor'easter bringing heavy rain and wind. There are indications that this system could be immediately followed by another nor'easter at the beginning of next week, as an active cold season pattern takes over to end October.

Extended Forecast

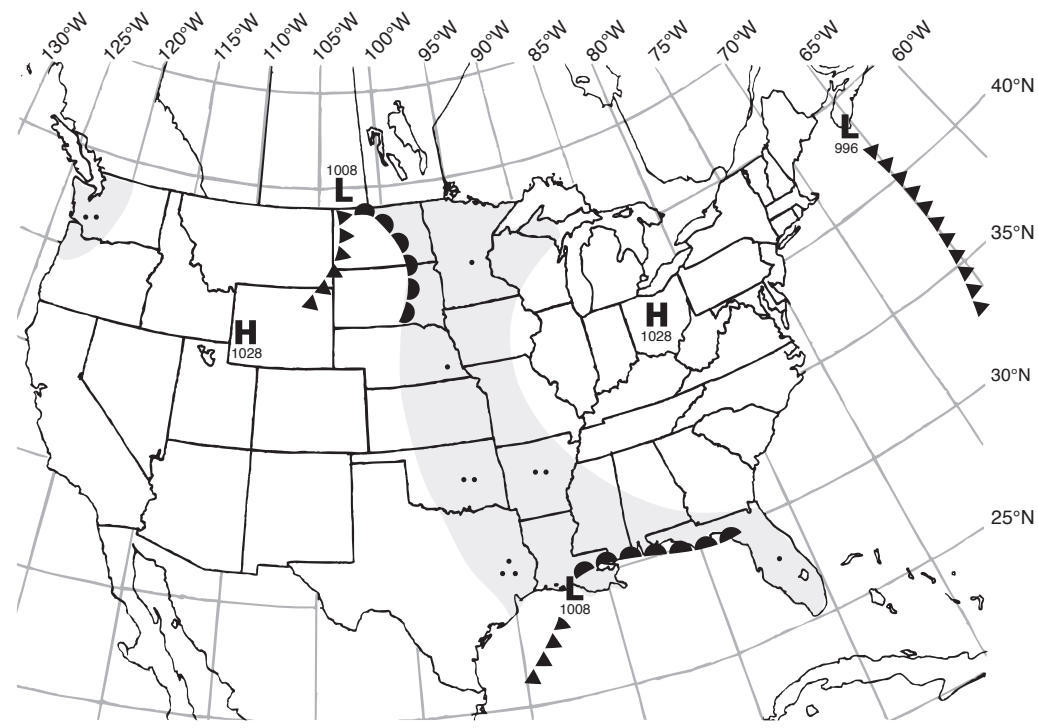
Today: Mostly clear. High around 48°F (9°C). Gusty NW winds at 15–20 mph.

Tonight: Clear and cool. Low around 34°F (1°C). Winds NW at around 10 mph.

Tomorrow: Partly Cloudy. High around 52°F (11°C). Low around 44°F (7°C). West winds at about 10 mph.

Saturday: Rain, possibly heavy at times. Breezy. High around 49°F (9°C). Low around 44°F (7°C).

Sunday: Sunday: A chance of showers early. High around 50°F (10°C)



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, October 25, 2018

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols			Other Symbols
H High Pressure	Trough		Snow	Rain	Fog
L Low Pressure	Warm Front	Showers	* ▽	• ▽	Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	Cold Front	Light	*	•	Haze
	Stationary Front	Moderate	**	••	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and *The Tech*
		Heavy	⁂	∴	

EECS Professor Davis praises name 'College of Computing'

Computing, from Page 1

for 6.036 (Introduction to Machine Learning).

"The world is not just digital but also physical," White continued, recommending that the engineering undergraduate curriculum should be revisited.

EECS Professor Randy Davis, on the other hand, liked the college's messaging, praising at the meeting the choice to name it the "College of Computing" rather than of "computer science." "We all think that's the right title," Davis said.

Professor of Materials Science and Engineering Heather Lechtman said at the forum that there was only one charge that president and provost should give to the new college: to save the planet. "We have a time limit on whether or not this species is actually going to persist," Lechtman said.

EECS Professor Vladimir Bulović said at the forum that MIT must first determine what would make up the "intellectual glue" of the college — before selecting the dean. Discussion of the dean was a popular topic at the faculty forum.

Provost Martin Schmidt PhD '88 explained at the forum that the bridge faculty would likely be people who would get a "chance of success at this institution perhaps in a way that they might not have at another institution." In particular, Schmidt said they might be junior faculty.

"I sit on the bridge" between computing and other fields, Professor of Physics and EECS Isaac Chuang '90 said at the meeting. "And I'm waiting for the bridge to collapse."

Chuang said he was concerned about how bridge teaching and the college's academic mission would work, noting that a college it is different from labs and centers that cross departments.

White also said that he thought the main challenge in creating the new College will be figuring out how the bridge faculty, who would have "two allegiances," would work.

Professor of Physics Krishna Rajagopal said at the faculty meeting, "I don't like the phrasing that the core is about advancing computing and the bridge is about advancing other disciplines." He said it should be the other way around, and continued that MIT currently has many professors who bridge departments — for example, there are many professors in the mathematics department who advance physics, and many professors in the physics department who advance math.

Stephen A. Schwarzman, who donated 350 million dollars for the creation of the college that will be named for him, will have "no voice in how we structure this [college] academically," Schmidt said in response to a question at the faculty forum.

MIT has not yet decided on the site for the new building for the college, but is considering five sites on the main campus, Schmidt said at the faculty meeting.

Schmidt acknowledged that some faculty were concerned about the speed with which the college has been announced at the faculty meeting. He said it was "important for us to declare where we want to go and then see the process that gets us there."

The college has support in letter form from all five school deans, EECS and CSAIL leadership, the MIT Turing award recipients, and the IDSS and Quest for Intelligence directors and ORC co-director, Chandrakasan said at the faculty meeting.

Jessica Shi and Kaitlyn Hennacy contributed reporting.

All five of MIT's waste compactors are not outputting any recycling

Recycling, from Page 1

China is the main importer of solid waste in the world, processing 80 percent of the world's recycling, focusing on paper and plastic.

In addition to the impact that lower recycling rates have on the environment, this change also increases how much MIT is paying for waste management. MIT pays for trash by the tonnage, and receives some compensation on recycling depending on how much money the vendor made from the recycled materials.

Davis was unable to share the cost per ton of materials nor a typical reimbursement rate for the recycling because that is proprietary information and other companies could underbid MIT's current vendor.

MIT produces between 300 and 400 tons of waste materials in a typical month. The rate is closer to 400 tons during the semester and lower during the summer and winter.

As of May, all five of MIT's waste compactors aren't outputting any recycling due to contamination levels. Davis is working on restricting access to at least some of the compactors, such as in Stata, in the hopes that this will reduce contamination.

Davis cautions the MIT community to think critically about what is and is not reusable as well as the lifetime of the products they buy.

For example, a padded envelope is not recyclable and belongs in the trash. "You can't use it for anything," Davis said, "because you can't separate the plastic bubbles from the paper."

Disposable utensils and non-food compostable items usually get treated as trash as well, because of food contamination on the utensils and the fact that those items are only compostable in industrial composters. Instead, people should use reusable utensils and dishware to cut down on waste.

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Solution to Big Time

from page 11

1	7	4	5	6	2	8	3	9
8	6	5	7	3	9	1	2	4
2	9	3	4	8	1	7	5	6
4	1	8	3	9	6	2	7	5
7	3	9	2	4	5	6	8	1
6	5	2	1	7	8	4	9	3
9	2	6	8	5	4	3	1	7
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Solution to Jonas

from page 11

1	2	6	3	5	4
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2	3	1	4	6	5
4	5	3	6	2	1
6	1	5	2	4	3

Solution to Suite Life

from page 12

7	4	5	9	1	2	8	3	6
6	3	2	8	5	7	1	9	4
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9	7	6	3	2	8	5	4	1

Solution to Fictional

from page 11

S	C	R	A	P		I	T	C	H		D	A	T	A
P	L	E	B	E		D	R	A	Y		I	R	O	N
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	V	I	O	L	E	T	C	R	A	W	L	E	Y	
C	A	D	D	I	E		H	E	X	E	S			
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A	R	I	A		P	E	T	U	N	I	A	P	I	G
F	O	X	Y		J	I	V	E		E	L	I	T	E
T	O	E	S		S	T	A	R		S	E	D	E	R

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EDITORIAL

College of Computing must make interdisciplinary work its prime directive

Computing is an important tool for problems that ultimately belong to other fields

The launch of the $1 billion Schwarzman College of Computing will mark the most significant change to the structure of MIT since the 1950s, and is already making waves in the worlds of tech and higher education. While the creation of the new college has the potential to make a significant positive impact, its success hinges on its ability to place its interdisciplinary vision, rather than aspirations of computational pioneering, at the center of its implementation. The vast bulk of the world's most important problems and most interesting questions exist in the physical realm rather than the digital one, and while computation does well as a standalone field, it shines best when used as a tool for facing these problems.

The College of Computing is intended to "integrat[e] AI studies and research with disciplines throughout MIT to a degree and with an intensity that, it is believed, is unmatched anywhere else," according to MIT News's FAQ. Its announcement comes at a time when computing is becoming ubiquitous. Every discipline has unique needs with respect to computing — for instance, urban planners must now consider autonomous vehicles when designing cities, economists are increasingly integrating machine learning into their data analysis practices, and neuroscientists are deciphering the pathogenesis of diseases and complex disorders with transcriptomics. MIT needs to consider precisely how computing and AI will be integrated with these different disciplines. How will the 25 bridge faculty of the college work? And if the college is truly cross-cutting, how exactly will it interact with all the other schools aside from just these 25 faculty members? The Institute must not neglect the details of how possible research collaborations might work as it continues to plan the college.

One such detail, for example, is the building that will house the college. The architecture of MIT's Main Group promotes cross-disciplinary work by physically placing faculty of different fields near each other. Researchers can often walk a short way down the hall and encounter scholars from other fields. If the College of Computing is supposed to interact with all departments, perhaps its faculty — especially faculty who are already considered as bridges between departments — ought to be distributed among existing buildings.

Furthermore, MIT should pay close attention to the college's role in education at the Institute. The College of Computing has the opportunity to serve as a model for how to integrate computer science education into other fields, especially in the undergraduate curriculum. It will be uniquely positioned to provide students with the knowledge and skillsets necessary to combine distinct skills. But how can the college create students that are fluent in both computing and their primary field without simply absorbing those students into computing, with their primary field as an afterthought? Students who currently want to gain experience in computational thinking must take classes in the Electrical Engineering and Computer Science department. Unsurprisingly, this encourages students to simply declare majors or minors in Course 6, and it also misses opportunities to tailor computing classes more appropriately to each field.

Relatedly, a concerning aspect of the dialogue surrounding the new college is the emphasis being placed on student demand for more computational thinking classes, highlighted for example in an August *MIT Technology Review* article by President Reif which markedly portends the college's announcement. While it is vital that MIT keep students heavily involved in every decision that affects them (not limited to the College of Computing), this particular case has one important issue. MIT students, while often aspiring to make a genuinely positive impact on the world, are primarily looking for employability and financial security from an education, and are perfectly justified in doing so. A computation-focused degree is one of the best ways of achieving these goals, regardless of the relative good it does for the world compared to other career pathways. MIT should be mindful of this when basing its decisions regarding the best course of action for humanity as a whole on the choices students make. It must stay true to its mission of increasing the connectedness of computing and other disciplines even if students continue to enroll in Course 6 *en masse*, by tailoring its computational engineering offerings more heavily towards their uses in the physical world.

One example of a department that would benefit from tailoring of computation classes is Biological Engineering. Currently, BE undergraduates have very few classes to choose from if they would like to focus their studies on "computational and systems biology," an optional concentration of study that BE undergraduates can choose to pursue. Moreover, many classes in the concentration, such as Introduction to Machine Learning (6.036), belong to other departments. BE students would benefit from a machine learning course that gives them the tools and experience to address questions relevant to drug design optimization, image processing, protein interaction modeling, and a myriad of other highly contextualized problems in sub-fields of biological engineering.

A class where contextualization has been implemented well is thermodynamics. From Unified Engineering: Thermodynamics (16.004) for Aerospace Engineering majors to Thermodynamics and Kinetics (5.60) for Chemistry majors, the many flavors of thermodynamics allow students to obtain skills relevant to their future career goals. A mechanical engineer would not benefit as much as a biochemist from learning about the thermodynamics of enzyme reactions. MIT should consider models like thermodynamics as it plans how to integrate computer science education throughout the undergraduate curriculum. Computing is ultimately a tool for many disciplines, and it should be treated as such, not just as an end in itself.

Lastly, the college has the opportunity to both study and teach students how computers fit into every aspect of the modern world, from how the military uses of data science to gather intelligence to how the changing privacy landscape will affect people of the future to what AI will mean for the economy. How are computers changing our lives, and how do we want them to change our lives? These are questions we should consider as we continue to integrate computing more fully both into MIT and into society, and they are questions that, again, the college will be uniquely positioned to answer.

If the college fails in its mission, MIT lurches dangerously closer to becoming an "Institute of Computing." Vast funding and resources will be devoted solely to innovation for innovation's sake, undergraduate enrollments in every other field will dwindle, and, worst of all, nobody will even know what it all means. With careful deliberation and decisive action, the Institute can avoid these worst-case scenarios.

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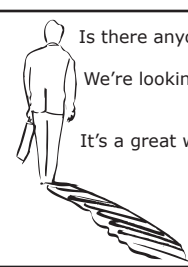

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CORRECTIONS

In the article, "Machines and medicine: The future of AI in healthcare," one of the authors' names was misprinted as Jocelyn Chen. The article was written by Jocelyn Shen and Jordan Harrod.

OPEN LETTER

President Reif, cut MIT's ties to Saudi Arabia now!

The Saudi regime targets and kills civilians in Yemen, oppresses and executes women and LGBTQ people, and assassinates journalists. MIT must not collaborate with them.

By Lukas Wolters, Nicolas Dumas, and Marsin Alshamary

Dear President Reif,

We write to you as graduate students in the Political Science Department at MIT, concerned about the Institute's relationship with Saudi Arabia. We come from all over the world and have a range of political, religious, and ideological backgrounds. As students of politics, we understand that the world is incredibly complex, and that sometimes in order to pursue good goals, actors must make difficult decisions. We know that you and MIT's leadership initially approached the Institute's partnership with Saudi Arabia with the noblest of intentions. However, at this point, MIT's continued collaboration with the Saudi government sends the message that human rights violations can be overlooked in favor of financial considerations. It assures Mohammad bin Salman (MBS), the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, that MIT will tolerate his present and future transgressions. And it enables the regime to profit off of MIT's reputation. This both grants the kingdom impunity and damages MIT's reputation. For these reasons, we urge you to 1) end all business between MIT and the government of Saudi Arabia, 2) release a statement condemning the government of Saudi Arabia for their continued human rights violations, and 3) encourage other universities and companies to do the same.

We write this letter with a heavy heart. We share your belief that MIT should collaborate widely with people from around the world, and we also recognize that there are plenty of MIT students, staff, and faculty from Saudi Arabia. We wish to emphasize that our objection is entirely to the MBS regime and not to the people of Saudi Arabia. We value the contributions that our Saudi colleagues have made to the MIT global community. One of the things we cherish most about MIT is that it is a place where people come from all around the world and are treated with dignity and respect. Some of us come from authoritarian countries, and we know what it's like to be targeted, stereotyped, and blamed for the actions of those countries' leaders. We reject in the strongest possible terms any racism or discrimination against people from Saudi Arabia.

On March 24, 2018, you hosted MBS at MIT and announced a suite of new collaborations between MIT and various Saudi government-controlled entities. These collaborations are on topics that are tremendously important and valuable, such as vaccine research, renewable energy, and medical technology. We know that MIT entered into these agreements with the best of intentions, and that, at the time you met with MBS, many analysts believed that he would be a reformer.

> **MIT's continued collaboration with the Saudi government sends the message that human rights violations can be overlooked in favor of financial considerations.**

In the months since you personally met with MBS and accepted funding from entities controlled by his regime, that same regime has continued a campaign of cruelty and evil. We do not use these terms lightly. The MBS regime has continued to target civilians with air strikes in Yemen and to enforce a blockade that restricts civilian access to food and medicine. It has continued its "Guardianship" system, under which women are considered the ward of their husbands, fathers, or sons, and require their approval for things as basic as going to school or getting on a plane. Women in Saudi Arabia who disobey their guardian can be arrested. Since you met with MBS, his regime has arrested several human rights activists and is currently seeking the death penalty for five of them, including Israa al-Ghomgham, who would be the first woman to be executed in Saudi Arabia for human rights activism. Al-Ghomgham's "crime," for which MBS wants her to die, is advocating for women's right to drive and abolition of the guardian system. Being LBGTQ also continues to be a crime in Saudi Arabia — one that is punishable by imprisonment, torture, and execution.

According to current reporting, MBS also ordered the targeting of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, and we are deeply disturbed by reports that Saudi officials tortured and murdered him. In a New York Times article about the team that allegedly tortured, killed, and dismembered Khashoggi, we were beyond horrified to see a photograph of yourself shaking hands with MBS on MIT's campus, while one of the alleged perpetrators, Maher Abdulaziz Mutreb, looks on in the background. This photo disgraces MIT's reputation and provides the MBS regime with a veil of normalcy.

The MIT-Saudi collaboration has drawn much criticism, starting from when it was announced. Shortly after MBS's visit, you responded to a critical editorial from *The Tech*, writing:

"As a starting point, we strongly favor a strategy of engaging with the world and of opening the doors to collaboration. However, favoring engagement sometimes requires wrestling with complex choices, as when we are invited to work on subjects of important shared interest by parties whose values and actions in other areas we reject. In each case, and repeatedly over time, we make our best assessment and form a judgment: By engaging, do we see a significant opportunity to do some good or drive some progress in areas that matter to our faculty and students?"

> **The MBS regime has funneled money to MIT, as it has to other universities, think tanks, and media groups, in an effort to legitimize its regime and to buy our silence.**

Respectfully, MIT has no shared interests with MBS. Engaging with him does less good and drives less progress than using MIT's voice to strongly condemn him and his government. Although many initially thought him to be a reformer of the kingdom, he has turned out to be a ruthless and illiberal dictator. MBS does not care about vaccine research, improving medical technology, or renewable energy. To him, technology and science aren't tools to improve the human condition. Instead, much like the superficial reforms he has enacted in Saudi Arabia, they are meant to disguise and distract from underlying problems. The MBS regime has funneled money to MIT, as it has to other universities, think tanks, and media groups, in an effort to legitimize its regime and to buy our silence. We know that you did not intend the MIT-Saudi collaboration to work this way, and we know that you are as personally horrified by MBS and his regime as we are.

We recognize that the funding MIT receives from Saudi Arabia has been channeled towards serious and noble research projects here at MIT. We understand that if MIT were to speak out against human rights violations in Saudi Arabia, there may be financial retaliation, as has been the case in Canada, Germany, and Sweden. However, a renowned institution like MIT must not be threatened into silence. Moreover, with an endowment of over $16 billion on which it managed to generate a staggering investment return of 13.5 percent in 2017, MIT cannot be threatened into silence. It is precisely because of MIT's financial collaboration with Saudi Arabia that we believe it is so important that MIT's leadership speak out.

We hope, as we are sure you do too, that the day will come when the women of Saudi Arabia are no longer treated as property of their husbands, when the testimony of women is given equal weight to that of men, when LGBTQ people can live freely without fears of being punished and killed, when citizens can criticize the government without being thrown in prison, when journalists can pursue the truth without fear of their own government hunting them down, and when no parent has to watch their own child starve to death because of an inhumane and disproportionate blockade. When that day does come, we will join you in facilitating and celebrating an MIT-Saudi collaboration. Until then, continued collaboration with the Saudi Arabian government is morally reprehensible.

MIT is respected in every corner of the world and has a history of rising against oppression. As President of MIT, you have an incredible microphone at your disposal. The entire world is listening.

Please, end the silence.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,
Marsin R. Alshamary
Nasir Almasri
Paige H. Bollen
Tugba Bozcaga
Nicolas Dumas
Andrew L. Halterman
Timothy P. McDonnell
Nina K. McMurry
Aidan Milliff
Kacie Miura
Gabriel Nahmias
Rachel Esplin Odell
Mina E. Pollmann
Blair Read
Stuart Russell
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GUEST COLUMN

We should get rid of prisons

The problems inherent in the system require its abolition

By Alula Hunsen

"In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body — it is heritage," Ta-Nehisi Coates, the esteemed former writer for *The Atlantic* who frequently broaches blackness and vulnerability in America, tells his son in *Between The World and Me* that the violation of the black body was fundamental to the construction of the United States, destruction particularly exhibited through the atrocities that composed slavery. Starting with slavery as instituted in the first 236 years of this country, a line can be drawn connecting crop liens and sharecropping, the Ku Klux Klan, Jim Crow, and a police force with roots in the slave-catching crews of the 19th century to the continual reduction of the black body to a whipping post which dominates the racial history of this country. Moreover, we continue to reinvent this subjugation rather than categorically address it; the adage of revolutionary circles goes, "the system isn't broken, it's working exactly how it's supposed to." How have we let this dehumanization persist after slave revolts, the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power movement, in our prisons as well? And how, if possible, can we reverse course? The injustice perpetuated in prisons, both through inherent racism throughout the penal system and dehumanization beaten into our incarcerated populations, warrants abolition as a movement and a cause to fight this state oppression.

> **The re-institutionalization of slavery through imprisonment has categorically wronged hundreds of thousands of prisoners.**

Just under one percent of people in the United States are currently incarcerated. This is the highest incarceration rate in the world, and it is strongly attributable to a series of baffling policy changes such as the prison abolition movement in the 1970s and the general opposition to imprisonment as a solution, the "war on drugs," mandatory minima, and "super predator" legislation pushed with bipartisan support throughout the 80s and 90s. The "tough on crime" mantra that ran these two decades became a subtle dog-whistle, as enforcement fell particularly heavily on black communities through racist policy implementation (see "stop and frisk," enforcement of loitering laws and drug laws), which can be readily seen in our incongruous incarceration rates.

Beyond the primary impact on the imprisoned, it is useful to think about the scope of the problem in a different way — after all, one in 100 seems like a fairly low proportion. But that number is not necessarily representative of the effect felt by the population outside of the convicted offenders themselves. A reported 44 percent of black women and 32 percent of black men (compared to only 12 percent of white women and six percent of white men) have an imprisoned family member, which speaks to how communities feel the weight of so many members being lost to unjust imprisonment.

But it's not just the inherently racist nature of the criminal justice system leading up to the jailing of black people that embroils prisons in the controversy they perennially inhabit — the re-institutionalization of slavery through imprisonment has categorically wronged hundreds of thousands of prisoners who make pennies per hour while performing sometimes dangerous jobs and often have to pay back this money they've earned at commissaries anyway. This exploitation of the 13th amendment, which ended slavery as constructed in the South but allowed for forced/low wage labor under the conditions of state punishment, is one of the ugliest consequences of Reconstruction, as jailers and police officers would routinely lock up black people, unable to pay bail, and keep them for use as free labor until they were released. While not as explicitly corrupt, debtors' prisons and forced labor in prisons exist to this day. Douglas Blackmon, a writer for the Wall Street Journal, has documented the ways in which prison labor is a form of "neoslavery," as he puts it. This rejuvenated form of slavery comes replete with the same mistreatment and degradation, which is stillanappallinglyapparentproblem in prisons to this day, and it is emblematic of yet another immense failing, or immense misconstruction, of the prison system we currently have.

At the very least, inmates have sparked resistance to this oppression, most recently involving a nationwide prison strike involving 17 states. The strike was initiated on Aug. 21, the 47th anniversary of the murder of Black Panther and activist George Jackson, and ended on Sept. 9, the anniversary of the Attica prison revolt. Prisoners rebelled against their oppression through labor strikes, hunger strikes, refusal to pay for items in the commissary, and any other measure available to them. The brave organizers and participants put their money, sentences, and lives on the line to protest this injustice done to them by our very own justice system — and yet, we're not listening. They released demands for, among other things, the recognition of their humanity, an end to slave labor, an end to racial disparities in sentencing and parole approvals, as well as to the unencumbered right to the franchise. The fact that their strike was necessary for people to simply acknowledge the plight of the imprisoned, especially the black imprisoned, is frightening.

> **The terrible racial past and present of our prison systems means some form of abolition has to be instituted for real change to occur.**

It's likely you've heard of some form of the "rehabilitative vs. retributive" arguments in prison reform argument — the debate revolves around the question of whether prisons should ready prisoners for release and reduce recidivism rates or punish the act of crime. The popular discussion on the topic generally centers around trying to find some happy medium through which we can accomplish both goals and on maintaining prisons to prevent crime from happening in the first place, but evidence from the National Institute of Justice and the Sentencing Project shows that any deterrence effect is strongly drawn from the probability of getting caught, and not from length of sentence or severity of punishment. Bottom line, irrespective of what crime reduction measures we replace and what philosophy or methodology we use, the notions of safety (white safety, to a large extent) and being "tough on crime" are not worth the caging and abusing human beings. Furthermore, the terrible racial past and present of our prison systems means some form of abolition has to be instituted for real change to occur.

The current penal system presents several large-scale problems: it strips prisoners of the right to the franchise, public assistance, and gainful employment; it systematically imprisons and enslaves black and brown people; and it destroys both communities and the imprisoned. Solutions go beyond the scope of small-scale reforms like decriminalizing drug possession and releasing small-time offenders. We need to consider much larger-scale actions in the form of outright abolition, outright or large-scale releases, reforms that drastically change policing in black communities, court procedures (such as truly representative juries, which involve getting rid of things like peremptory challenges), and otherwise, complete compliance with the very reasonable demands put forth by the prisoners who took part in the strike. Clearly, we can't just filter out and discard what are fundamental and terrible aspects of the penal system — we've got to start anew. And for those who are worried/confused about abolition, it's not just one movement with one implementation; some have suggested drastically reducing our prison population and relying mostly on a GPS monitoring system for convicted offenders, while others recommend complete disassembly of the prison-industrial complex.

Many political candidates have come out endorsing reforms in the milieu of decriminalizing marijuana, releasing drug offenders, and getting rid of mandatory minimums, but these changes may not be enough. These measures may be nothing more than layering bandages over a festering wound, while the infection itself still lingers. The prison system as currently constructed is an aberration, and abolition seems to many to be the most total way to right the wrongs we're doing to our own citizens. Direct and immediate action is necessary, and everything from divestment to protests to organized noncompliance to strikes all advance awareness and solutions to this dire human rights issue.

Alula Hunsen is a member of the MIT Class of 2021.

MUSICAL REVIEW

Come to the Fun Home! The Bechdel Funeral Home, that is

Tony-award winning musical *Fun Home* comes to the Boston Center for the Arts

Fun Home

Lyrics by Lisa Kron

Music composed by Jeanine Tesori

Adapted from Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*

Calderwood Pavilion at the Boston Center for the Arts

Oct. 19–Nov. 24

By Ivy Li
ARTS EDITOR

Death and history loom over the Bechdel funeral home, the historical museum lovingly crafted by its director, Alison's father Bruce Bechdel (Todd Yard), and cared for by her mother, Helen Bechdel (Laura Marie Duncan). The funeral home — affectionately named Fun Home by the children — is the stage set, with painted white eaves hanging from the ceiling and antique furniture and ornamental rugs on the floor. As adult Alison Bechdel (Amy Jo Jackson) illustrates her childhood and college years in her graphic memoir *Fun Home*, she recalls her newfound acceptance after coming out as lesbian in college just as her closeted gay father dies from getting hit by a truck. We know Bruce dies — it's revealed early on in the musical — but that's not the point. It's the circles drawn through and around it that we walk in this musical.

Go watch this musical. I can't do justice to this with words. In particular, this is a hard review to write because I can only explain events individually, but the musical audience can see all three timelines interacting together: Alison Bechdel as a child (Marissa Simeqi), college student (Ellie Van Amerongen), and adult. I imagine adapting the memoir into *Fun Home* the musical was difficult. The memoir makes numerous literary references to modernist works and explores themes of memory, sexual discovery, identity, and aesthetics with such meticulous detail that it's impossible to put all of this into a musical under two hours, so, of course, they have to omit details. The sharedkey theme is memory; the musical and memoir both explore how we revisit our painful memories, how we choose what to forget and remember, how we try to distill truth from them but can't because we only have the leftovers and the emotions that still pour from them.

Many adaptations don't translate well to different media, but playwright Lisa Kron expands on pivotal moments in the memoir that were only one or a few panels. Adult Bechdel can literally watch her child self being called to see a dead body her father was working on, and then asking what it all meant. She can look back to her college self looking back to her child self, when Bruce told her to wear a dress and her child self did not like it. She can even announce, "Caption!" as she works on her comic book, deciding how to record her history. And naturally, she remembers the time Bruce criticized her artwork as a young child for its lack of composition and aesthetic appeal, how her work is all over the place, in a cheeky nod to what she's working on now.

Alison discovers her father is seeing a psychiatrist after handing a beer to a minor; Bruce says to her, seething, "I'm not good like you." We find out what this means when college-age Allison comes out to her parents after starting a relationship with Joan (Desire Graham), and Helen reveals Bruce's extramarital affairs with men and underage boys. Helen, expectedly, had reacted negatively to Allison's coming out,

COURTESY OF NILE SCOTT STUDIOS

The child, adult, and college-age Allisons all sing together at the end of the musical *Fun Home*.

while Bruce and Allison come to an unfulfilling, half-spoken understanding during their last conversation before Bruce's death. Alison has reason to suspect it was suicide, giving the musical a different light.

While Alison is free to explore multiple times in her life, Bruce Bechdel is trapped in his time period: the fact that he was born decades before Alison meant he has already married Helen and has had children. In many ways, it is too late to explore his queer identity without destroying his livelihood. Bruce is a complicated man. Todd Yard gives a controlled performance as Bruce, but he brings ferocity to scenes where the perfectionist artist comes through while carrying a gentleness as a loving father, singing to Alison before she sleeps.

While this seems like a morbid drama, it can be funny, endearing, and lighthearted. The exuberant performance by the children actors — Marissa Simeqi, Luke Gold, and Cameron Levesque — brings an appreciated vitality to moments of humor in a musical about death. The small theater and set design bring us closer to the stage than a Broadway musical, giving us an intimate look into their home life. The musical numbers are upbeat and catchy yet fit wholly into the ironic world of a fun home.

Explaining the elements separately cannot compare to how emotionally resonant this musical is on stage. Alison Bechdel explores her father's death in suppositions and half-truths, reads in between the lines of letters and conversations, and draws from slivers of memories: memory is all but what remains of Bruce Bechdel's intellectual, complicated life before his death. We join her on this circular journey, leaping through time over and over, watching Allison growing into herself while Bruce hurtles towards a death that we know is coming but are afraid of anyways.

INTERVIEW

Steve Carell on addiction in *Beautiful Boy*

Steve Carell shares his experience acting in a drama about crystal meth addiction

ALEXANDER JEROME SANDBERG —THE TECH

Steve Carell and Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey arrive at the AMC Boston Common theater for the red carpet premiere of the movie *Beautiful Boy*, Oct. 18.

Beautiful Boy

Directed by Felix van Groeningen

Screenplay by Felix van Groeningen and Luke Davies

Starring Steve Carell, Timothée Chalamet, Maura Tierney, Amy Ryan, and Timothy Hutton

Rated R, Now Playing

By Michelle Hung

In an interview regarding his recent performance in the drama *Beautiful Boy*, actor Steve Carell sheds light on his experience portraying the father of a crystal meth addict.

The Huntington News: As a father, how did your experiences raising kids influence your experience filming *Beautiful Boy*?

Steve Carell: From the moment you have kids, you are terrified of something bad happening to them, and when something actually does, it's a parent's worst nightmare. So to imagine what David Sheff was going through when his son was spiraling out of control with a methamphetamine addiction... it's hard to wrap my head around it. It's hard to comprehend how bad that must've been.

The Tech: In a lot of the starring roles you are best known for, you've played a comedic character very convincingly. What was your experience as a lead in a movie as dark and serious as *Beautiful Boy*? What were the most difficult aspects of adopting the mindset of a character like David?

Steve Carell: I sort of approach comedies and dramas the same way. I think comedies are funnier when they're believable, if there's something truthful and honest about the characters. And that's certainly the case with a drama. The more that a person can relate, the more it resonates with [viewers]. I related to this character because I'm a dad. As I was saying before, it's a really really scary prospect seeing your kids go through something like this. So, there was never inclination to be funny on my part, per se, but there's also humor even within the darkest moments. I think we look for those moments as well — it's not all gloom and doom.

Boston Globe: What's something that you learned from this process about addiction?

Steve Carell: I didn't know a lot about methamphetamines and one of the things I did learn is that it alters your brain chemistry and it reduces your capacity for rational thought, and it makes it just that much more difficult to [escape] the throes of it. It's such an insidious drug.

Boston Globe: How important was it for you to showcase that addiction is not just a singular disease; it's something that affects a person's whole community, their whole family?

Steve Carell: That's one of the important aspects of this— that it tells a story from two perspectives, based on two books: *Tweak* by Nic Sheff and *Beautiful Boy* by Nic's father David. They have very different voices, really. Nic's book is much more first person, very immediate, very much in the now, and David's book is much more of an overview about their relationship and his ruminations on this entire period with his son. So, I think it is important to get a balance of both sides. It's an interesting construct that you do get to see. [Addiction] is destroying a lot of people at the same time.

The interview has been edited and cut for clarity and length.

ARTS ARTS ARTS

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CONCERT REVIEW

Backyard bash

They played the bash — it was a backyard bash

FredFest

East Campus Courtyard

Oct. 19

By Johnson Huynh and Alana Chandler
STAFF WRITERS

ÁRON RICARDO PEREZ-LOPEZ —THE TECH

Valleyheart performs at FredFest, the annual live concert hosted by East Campus, in the EC courtyard Oct. 20.

It was frosty outside in the East Campus courtyard. The crowd didn't seem to mind it one bit, though. We ended up dancing under the cover of darkness, rock music filling the air. The venue was small — a solitary stage with simple spotlights in the courtyard. Fredfest's audience was even smaller, but that made the experience more intimate.

The audience's chatter quieted to the first strums of Freddesk, a band comprised of EC residents. The deep, ominous voice of the main singer (Jacob Miske '20) seemed to echo across the EC courtyard, enclosing us with the heavy beats of the drums (Hadrian Merced '20). The music began with a slow, almost Russian polka-like rhythm, and escalated to a spirited alternative punk vibe with electric guitar solos. The audience, previously resembling Stonehenge figures frozen on the lawn, began to loosen and sway with the emotional tremor of the lead singer's voice. Fists pumped, heads bopped, and hips swung to the inky, almost eerie energy of their notes. Thirty minutes flew by, final cheers were shouted, and the stage was cleared for the next act.

Without Freddesk, the courtyard began to feel cold again as the audience waited under the moon. Finally, a group of lumberjack-esque men entered the stage; this was Valleyheart. And oh, did they capture our hearts. For those looking for a song to shout passionately in the midst of midterms ("We're All Gonna Die") or to whip your hair to when you've had one too many cookies from the dining hall, Valleyheart has got you covered. Their act was a roller coaster ride of emotions, cruising forward with the smooth harmony of the band's voices and the strident rock pulse of acoustics and drums. As the pink and aqua lights shined across the musicians, it seemed as though they were channeling notes from another world.

Once Valleyheart faded into an outro, there was a short break before Bathouse came on. The night came alive again with the sound of droning guitars. The band pushed the envelope of prog-rock. Unorthodox methods was the name of their game. At one point, they were fiddling with their pickups just to hear a wickedly delicious drone. Fusing together elements of punk, jazz, and psychedelic rock, Bathouse's performance was a moment to catch our breath after the intense dancing of Valleyheart. This was when blankets were carried down from people's rooms and spread out on the dark grass. The crowd sat down, immersed in ethereal music.

And then it was all over, just like that. One final guitar solo concluded their set powerfully. Air Traffic Controller was up next, and this was an experience that really highlighted Fredfest's ability to make an intimate setting. Unlike previous bands, Air Traffic Controller played a tune more akin to folk and electro-pop. The lead singer switched between an electric banjo, to an electric guitar, to an electric acoustic. His energy became contagious.

In the background, a group of friends had started dancing to their catchy tunes. In an instant, the blankets were tossed to the side to make an impromptu dance floor. We were swinging our arms and pumping our fists. The mood of the concert had never been any higher than it was at that moment. So much so, that we were able to get Air Traffic Controller to do one last song for us.

The end of the concert once again reaffirms how special FredFest is for East Side Culture — a love letter to the quirkiness and the rock that fills its many halls.

CONCERT REVIEW

MITSO's first concert of the 2018–2019 school year!

A stunning performance inspired by Leonard Bernstein's 100th birthday

KEVIN LY —THE TECH

Adam K. Boyles conducts the MIT Symphony Orchestra for its first performance of the 2018-19 school year Oct. 19.

Benjamin Britten: "Four Sea Interludes" from Peter Grimes, Joseph Haydn: Symphony No. 99, Randall Thompson: Symphony No. 2

MIT Symphony Orchestra

Conducted by Adam K. Boyles

Kresge Auditorium

Oct. 19

By Nyssa Miller and Sophia Chan

I think the MITSO chose Britten's "Four Sea Interludes" to show off — the pieces were technically challenging, thrilling, and immediately blew back the audience. The orchestra attacked each interlude with a fierce vivacity that bled into every bow stroke and breath. Just getting cozy and enjoying the show was literally impossible — whenever the music slowed, rolling like gentle waves, a thundering uproar from the lower registers would jar you back to the moment. The dynamic range of the orchestra was frankly very impressive. Kresge seemed to vibrate, literally, with the energy on the stage.

After that electric initial performance, Boyle took a moment to explain that, in honor of Leonard Bernstein's hundredth birthday, a piece that the man himself conducted was an appropriate ode to the Massachusetts-born composer. Then Boyle broke down the Symphony No. 99 by Joseph Haydn. The Father of Symphonies wrote No. 99 in England — a piece which is notable for a few reasons, one of which being the use of the clarinet. Theretofore, Haydn had never written for the clarinet, but did in this symphony as a nod to his old friend, Amadeus Mozart. Boyle detailed each movement of the symphony, which he related with such enthusiasm and gusto, as if he was describing each flavor of a four-course meal.

MITSO's performance of Haydn's Symphony No. 99 was definitely a delightful treat. I felt entranced. The violins were delicate yet bright as they tiptoed into the higher reaches of the staff, and the brilliant warmth of the ensemble imparted a sense of relief. It was easy to imagine being carted through a green countryside in the Commonwealth, on a warm summer day on the way to a cottage or garden estate. That feeling of being transported leagues away from Kresge continued until the last movements, when a lilting waltz began and, in time to the sways of the musicians, you could feel that dance in your bones. Each member of the orchestra was so absorbed in the music, from the bassists to Boyle on the podium. All in all, it was such a mesmerizing and beautiful rendition, and I felt like it was over much too soon.

MITSO's performance of Symphony No. 2 was characterized by a feeling of balance and completeness. The Allegro movement on the whole contained a rounded, jazzy theme. The orchestra's overall sound was vigorous and full of overlapping layers — often with several sounds playing one after the other. The horns showcased an ominous tone that hadn't been seen prior to this piece. The entire section felt very "new-world-esque," and it seems likely that Thompson drew inspiration from Leonard Bernstein's music in West Side Story.

In the Largo movement, the serene C major that underlined the section appeared less overtly jazzy, but rather more like a ballad. The orchestra sounded morose and pensive, with the stable base instruments providing support and the woodwinds highlighting the mysterious melody. Legato throughout, the Largo finished on a harmonious note.

The Vivace section was dominated by a fast 7/4 rhythm that resembled the French impressionist, comedic-type style. The jazziness of this movement shined — especially the whimsical middle part. Throughout, the Vivace proved rhythmic, playful, and adventurous.

Finally, the Andante movement of E Major sounded largely American in spirit. Moving onto the Allegro subsection, the piece becomes more childishly fun, though still maintaining its patriotic sound with its slow and steady pace. Through the hopefully bright sound brought out by the woodwinds, the Allegro was both joyous and curious, yet slightly more traditional than the previous movements. MITSO's grand ending was indeed very virtuosic; dynamic contrast was apparent and controlled, and the finale kept its jazzy tones.

All in all, MITSO's performance, though not without flaw in the professional sense, still provided much entertainment as well as musical and stylistic fulfillment.

ARTS ARTS ARTS

Big Time Rush

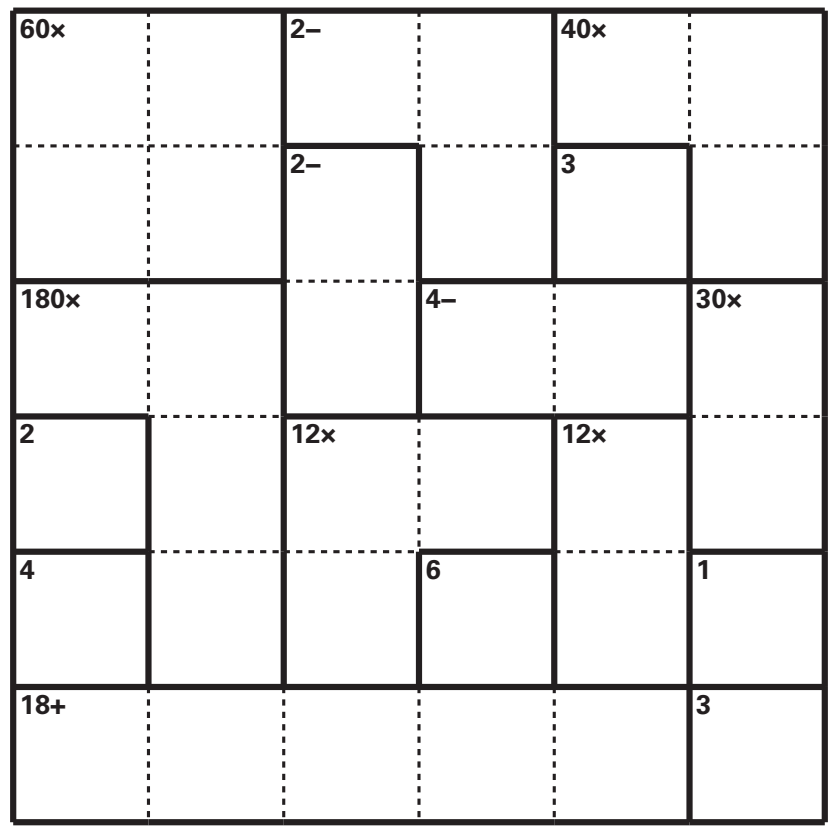
Solution, page 3

1		4			2		3	
	6		7					
		3	4		1	7		6
4							7	
7			2		5			1
	5							3
9		6	8		4	3		
					3		4	
	4		9			5		8

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

Jonas L.A.

Solution, page 3



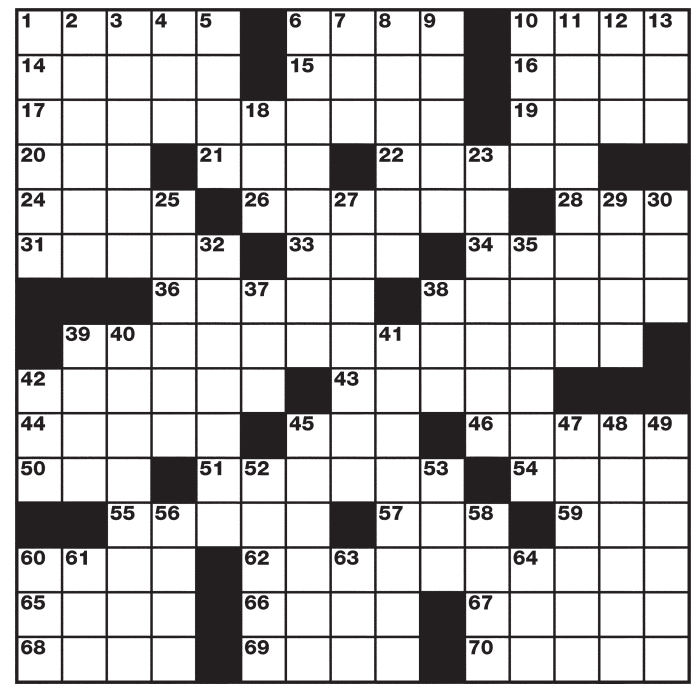
Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Fictional Flora by Mark McClain

Solution, page 3

ACROSS
1 Discontinue
6 Strong urge
10 Table figures
14 West Point newbie
15 Farm cart
16 Nutrient in spinach
17 Betty White in The Golden Girls
19 Visibility spoiler
20 Pac-12 sch.
21 Low grade
22 Morgan of 30 Rock
24 Sub
26 Aquatic group
28 Dash letters
31 Old engine power
33 Ben Solo's dad
34 Ashley of fashion
36 Annoy
38 Took it easy
39 Maggie Smith in Downton Abbey
42 Bag carrier
43 Spells
44 Clarification starter
45 Actor Patel
46 Interior appointments
50 Lummox
51 Emulated the 1 Down
54 Sushi fish
55 Zurich money
57 Autumn chill
59 Hyphenated ID
60 Puccini piece
62 Toon debuting in Porky's Romance
65 Sly
66 Trash talk
67 Upper echelon
68 Low digits
69 Flying symbol for each state
70 Passover meal

DOWN
1 Nursery rhyme couple
2 Storage area
3 Get back to
4 Tokyo-based leader
5 Remain unresolved
6 Yakety-yak
7 __TV ("Actuality" cable channel)
8 Football Hall of Fame city
9 Renewable energy, informally
10 Checker, for example
11 West Point mascot
12 As well
13 Director Lee
18 "You got it"
23 Within the rules
25 Tiered temple
27 Kind of ax
29 Feed (on)
30 Victimized
32 Bill & __ Gates Foundation
35 Ready to go
37 Small wooden platform
38 Far from stern
39 Improvised musical passage
40 Preoccupation, from the French
41 Moonshiner's nemesis
42 Covert org.
45 Double-dealing
47 Another term for a canine
48 How some tech support is provided
49 Park Service person
52 Dressed for bed
53 Racket
56 Starfish's arms
58 Diner desserts
60 Toward the stern
61 Milne marsupial
63 Govt. energy agency
64 Brewpub order



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by Randall Munroe

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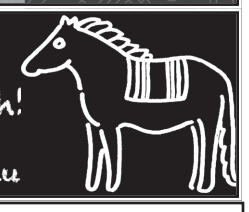

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Intro by Joi Ito, Director of the MIT Media Lab

ROAD TO 50
The Power of Community

ADVICE

Alphabetical advice

Auntie Matter on absent advisees, bitter boys, and creepy classmates

By Auntie Matter

If you have questions for Auntie Matter, please submit them at tinyurl.com/AskAuntieMatter. Questions have been edited for length, clarity, and content.

Dear Auntie Matter,

My students and advisees don't read or respond to my emails and don't show up to events and meetings that I schedule for them. What should I do?

— Forlorn Faculty

Dear Forlorn,

Auntie is flattered that the faculty are now reaching out to her for advice! She hopes she can be of some assistance despite her position as a mere undergraduate (though an undergraduate older than time itself).

You ask "what should I do?," but the answer to this question depends on many factors, not least the age of your students. Auntie assumes you are an undergraduate advisor. If your question is about graduate students, you likely have a serious problem, and the matter is, as they say, above Auntie's pay grade. Graduate student advisees (theoretically) have a much closer relationship to their advisors, the dynamics of which Auntie will not pretend to understand.

Auntie suggests understanding why your students don't respond or show up to things, and tailoring your strategy for improving things that way. There might be some systematic issue with scheduling, like scheduling during 5–7 p.m., when athletes have practice. Or, maybe students are accidentally filtering your emails. Depending on how involved you want to be here, you could suggest your students set up their email so they always see your messages, by starring them or something similar. Are they students who once were responsive and engaged, and have since changed? If your students were once responsive, you might reach out to them and ask them if everything is going okay, because sudden changes in behavior might be indicative of some difficulty.

Unfortunately, especially if you are advising upperclassmen, you may just have to lower your expectations. Students might have an issue with how you communicate or might not like you, but the most likely answer is that they are just apathetic. If students do not value the time and effort you put in to reaching out to them, then you can just do whatever would be best for you and not focus as much on reaching out to them. Insofar as you can keep low expectations about student responsiveness, you might be less disappointed. Obviously that does not make it any less annoying, but if you cannot change your students' behavior, perhaps you can change how you experience that behavior.

Good luck!

Dear Auntie Matter,

I was trying to date/have a friends with benefits relationship with this guy, but the last time we met, he did a few things that offended me. After that, he kept trying to see me, and I deferred a few times before eventually explaining that he had made me uncomfortable, so I did not want to see him in person but was okay to talk online. He lost it and blocked me, which confused me because I didn't even want to talk. I don't think I could have handled it better, but it still bothers me. How do I feel better about this?

— Blocked by Bitter Boy

Dear Blocked,

You seem to already know this, but if you tried to set this boundary in a reasonable way, then his overreaction is ultimately his responsibility here.

To put this a different way — why feel bad about the situation at all? Auntie suspects the main reason is that you think you hurt this guy's feelings. If this is the case, try reexamining your actions in the situation. If you stand by your actions — if you think that setting this boundary was the correct decision and that you set it in an appropriate way — then you should remind yourself of that. You could not have hurt his feelings less. You could not have controlled his reaction more.

Furthermore, even if you reexamine the situation and conclude you made some mistakes, then what's done is done, and Auntie believes you should try to forget about it. There is no reason to remember this guy except to carry any lessons you learned from the situation forward.

It's also possible that you feel like you should have foreseen this scenario and not gotten involved with this guy in the first place. Auntie believes this is an unreasonable expectation — we can never know what will happen when we enter into a relationship.

So, how can you feel better about the situation? Auntie does have two pieces of practical advice: first, if you have any e-exchanges with this young man, you should delete them, so you cannot keep reading them over. This will remove the temptation to dwell entirely. Second, you might want to decide that you will not have a relationship at all with this person for the foreseeable future. You might be worrying about whether he will "forgive" you, or something like that, but it is likely better to give yourself a clean break. Both of these actions will help you stop thinking about and replaying what happened.

Dear Auntie Matter,

In my class, which has a participation grade, and where I know the professor, I saw something absolutely disgusting. There was this guy peeling his fingernails off with a multitool. There was blood everywhere. My worry about this is that I looked openly disgusted in the class, and I have a relationship with the professor, so he might have noticed how grossed out I looked and I'm worried he will think I was being disrespectful. Should I say anything to the prof?

— Nauseated Notetaker

Dear Notetaker,

Auntie normally wouldn't speak so crassly, but she feels the need to say: this is some next-level horror movie shit.

Auntie has mostly included this question due to the same impulse that likely led you to ask it: the desire to inflict a disgusting story on others once we ourselves have endured it.

Auntie's advice is simple: If you noticed that the professor saw your expression, you could explain to him what happened, perhaps somewhat more delicately than above. Regardless of whether the professor saw, you could also go to the course staff and explain that your peer's behavior in class is making it hard to focus.

Finally: stay away from the man with the multitool.

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Remembering JJ Zhao '14, a fearlessly shining light

Brightening lives from China to Waukesha to MIT and beyond

By Friends of JJ Zhao

Jie Zhao, known by most as JJ, passed away on Friday, Oct. 5 after being fatally struck by a reversing vehicle near her home in West Cambridge. She was 27 years old (09/14/1991 – 10/05/2018).

JJ is remembered for her incredible enthusiasm for life, her brilliance, her propensity for self-improvement, and her constant drive to better the world around her. She always made time for friends and family, never hesitating to grow her community by bringing new and old friends together. With her energy, kindness, and confidence, she drove others to better themselves and to make an impact on the world. Her positivity and optimism never ceased to influence others and continues to inspire.

"It all starts with a decision: I can"

Behind JJ's bright eyes and unforgettable smile was a woman whose life was strengthened and refined many times over. She arrived in the U.S. at age 14 and moved to Waukesha, Wisconsin, where her mom had recently started a job. At that time, JJ spoke no English, but ceaselessly practiced the new language in order to support her mother as they settled into a brand new community and culture. At the time, JJ had the opportunity to visit the MIT campus, and upon her return, her mother remembers her loving the school, putting up a photo of MIT on her wall, and looking at it every day, determined to attend.

"If you can dream it, you can do it."

At MIT, JJ double majored in Economics (Course 14) and Management Science (Courses 15), and minored in Mathematics (Course 18). She was an enthusiastic resident of Baker House and McCormick Hall, always making members of these communities feel at home. As a member of Alpha Phi, she consistently brought joy, confidence, and a positive attitude to her sisters, inspiring them to be their best selves and to "always be growing." A natural leader, JJ also founded MIT's Smart Woman Securities, an organization focused on introducing women to investing and financial markets. In creating this community of like-minded women, JJ served as an irreplaceable role model of intelligence and determination balanced with kindness and encouragement.

After graduation, JJ began her professional career as a financial analyst in New York City. She returned to Boston to pursue a private equity role focused on energy infrastructure investments for one year before transitioning to tech, taking on a product role at Cambridge-based software company, HubSpot.

During her two years at HubSpot, JJ rose from a member of the Product Insights team to a Manager on the Sales & Operations team, demonstrating her aptitude, ability to tackle difficult challenges, and leadership potential. Her colleagues remarked: "Doing her best work was not just a principle but a lifestyle: she would run three miles to work nearly everyday, carrying her backpack along the Charles River, balance meetings and heads-down analyses, eat an astonishing number of blueberries, and finally leave late in the evening. Her energy was infectious, her contributions to HubSpot significant, and her kindness truly remarkable."

Though she poured herself into her career, JJ's friends were amazed by her ability to prioritize and balance her work with the three pillars around which she built her life and of which she never lost sight: family and friends, self improvement, and spirituality.

"Empower each other."

Though her mom lived in Wisconsin, and her dad remained in Shanghai both during and after her time at MIT, JJ always stayed in close touch with her parents. Her former roommates recall JJ spoke to them nearly every day, often repeating:

"My mother was the most beautiful woman I ever saw. All I am I owe to my mother. I attribute my success in life to the moral, intellectual and physical education I receive from her."

— George Washington

She described her mom as her "rock," who supported her through tough challenges and enabled her to maintain a sound mind in even the most challenging of circumstances. Her dad was her guiding "lighthouse," serving as her confidante and closest mentor, despite the distance between them.

JJ was treasured by her ever-expanding circle of friends. While others may reserve friendliness and enthusiasm for close friends, JJ had a unique ability and willingness to dedicate her undivided attention and time to others. She valued deep personal connections with each of her friends, always sharing her latest aspirations and seeking feedback to fuel her consistent self-improvement. JJ loved to bring people together, wholeheartedly welcoming them into her own personal community. The last gathering she hosted took place in her new West Cambridge condo that she recently purchased; friends of all backgrounds, ages, races, and religions joined together to celebrate this exciting milestone.

"JJ did not waste any time making her mark on this world. It breaks me to think of how much more she could have achieved if only she were blessed with a long life. I owe it to her to continue what she started: extending friendship, fully; even when it is not convenient, when it pulls you off your path, when it makes you nervous."

— Sterling Watson, MIT '15

"We always reframed turmoil and personal struggle as a growth opportunity, as a chance to repurpose the space in our heart that was carved by suffering to be filled with the liquid light of wisdom. You told me to be thankful for our hurt, because our suffering allows us to illuminate and discover our resilience."

— Sean Batir, MIT '14

"Grateful each day."

JJ loved coffee, but unlike many others who share this love, she began her mornings by, instead, writing down the previous day's experiences for which she felt most grateful. She was always open to new experiences, once saying, "without an exception, I never regretted taking a step forward to face a feared activity...which has helped me build my confidence little by little." Perhaps this is why her friends remember her for everything from mountaineering (with an ice axe!) and learning to gallop horses in New Hampshire, to completing a half marathon with nearly no training insub-eight minute miles.

You can learn more about JJ and her growth path, resilience, awareness, and glass half full optimism on her blog, from which the quotations in this article have been pulled.

CHRIS JELLY

"Curiosity, growth, principle and gratitude **are what drive me every day."**

"Be open to what the day brings, with wonder and acceptance"

While at MIT, JJ embraced a new realm — faith. She was drawn to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by feelings of peace and eternal self-worth, and became an active member. JJ brought unusual enthusiasm, rejoicing in the purpose, meaning, and direction that her newfound faith offered. In one particularly memorable sermon, she spoke of her decision to forgo her lucrative private equity career in favor of technology; she firmly believed that this was God's plan for her, and she chose to follow it without regret.

Most recently, JJ found an outlet for her spiritual energy as her congregation's volunteer public affairs specialist. She magnified this role, analyzing what the Church could offer the broader Boston community. Her professional experience, along with her daily-lived faith, produced a vision for a speaker series on professional and spiritual balance featuring highly successful Church members. She secured a Fortune 100 CEO as the first speaker, set to take place next Monday, Oct. 22.

"Take in the good, brush off the bad, get stronger and wiser and be ready to be reborn."

JJ, some words from your dad, on behalf of your parents:

"I love my baby girl. She is our everything, and her death makes it feel like the sky has shattered. She was energetic and cute, smart and extroverted. She worked seriously, dared to innovate, thought with clarity, loved her life, and was both diligent and thrifty. She developed all these good characteristics from both her education at MIT and her own efforts. Right now, we can only hope that she rests in peace up in Heaven!"

— Shao Min Zhao

From Kezi, Claire, Josh, Olivia, and Sean:

"We miss you so deeply. You are a light that will never dim in our hearts and by which we will be guided as we move forward in our lives. We will appreciate the small but powerful lessons that you've taught us: be kind to others, be hopeful, grateful, and unapologetically strive to be the best we can be. You have inspired us to lean on one another during this difficult time, taught us to heal by giving our fullest presence to others, and united us by teaching us how to give and receive love."

May your beautiful soul rest in peace. We love you so much.

JJ ran by the Charles River every day to work, and shared with many that it was one of her favorite places. In particular, she loved the view of MIT from the esplanade near Back Bay, where she lived for several years. Her friends and family would like to sponsor a bench and/or tree on the esplanade in her honor. Donations in JJ's honor can be made on this Go Fund Me page.

At this time, logistics for the funeral and a celebration of JJ's life are still being finalized. Please reach out to Claire O'Connell '14, Kezi Cheng '15, Olivia Papa '14, Josh Zeidman '14, or Sean Batir '14 with any questions.

A heartfelt thank you to all of JJ's friends and family who contributed to this article: Olivia Basil, Anna Blatz, Carina Caligiuri Kurban, Geoff Daigle, Lefang Jiang (Mother), Creed Jarrett Mangrum, Tom O'Connell, Skipper Plowman, Jake Reisch, Paul Syta, Sterling Watson, Melissa Yan, and Shao Min Zhao (Father).

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